

Minutes of the Easter Bush Development Board meeting held on 28 August 2013 at 2pm, Room 1-113, Roslin Institute Building

Present

Nick Ambrose, Scottish Government
David Argyle, R(D)SVS

John S Beveridge, Midlothian Council
John Brown, Roslin Foundation (Chair)
Julia Brown, Scottish Enterprise
Cllor Jim Bryant, Midlothian Council
David Hume, Roslin Institute
Ian Johnson, Midlothian Council

Jacqui Matthews, Moredun Institute
Christopher Mitchell, LaSalle Investment
Management
Nigel Paul, University of Edinburgh
Jonathan Seckl, University of Edinburgh
Geoff Simm, Scotland's Rural College
Steve Visscher, BBSRC
Chris Warkup, Biosciences KTN
Val White, University of Edinburgh (Easter Bush
Campus)

Karen Lewis, BBSRC

Apologies

Malcolm Bateman, Roslin Biocentre
Julie Fitzpatrick – Moredun Institute
Karen McAvenue, Scottish Government

In attendance

Val Finlayson (minutes)

1. Welcome and Introductions

JB (Chair) welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Easter Bush Development Board (EBDB) and round table introductions were made.

2. Apologies

JSB provided an update on the apologies which had been received in advance of the meeting.

3. Background to formation of the Bush Development Board

JB (Chair) provided a brief update on the background to the formation of the EBDB. It has largely been formed to act as a steering group to oversee the implementation of recommendations as given in the Bush Framework Masterplan which had been prepared on behalf of Midlothian Council, Scottish Enterprise and the University of Edinburgh. The Masterplan had been completed in early 2013.

DH gave a presentation on the current layout of Easter Bush and the mission to develop the area in to a major animal bioscience research and livestock improvement centre bringing together research, academia and industry partners. DH outlined the five phases of this development which will incorporate a new National Avian Research Facility, large animal research and imaging facility and an innovation hub. DH advised that we are in year 6 of a 20 year plan. The overall vision is for the delivery of a vibrant / sustainable campus. There is an enormous opportunity for Scotland with tremendous links to the Medical school / Bioquarter. SV commented on BBSRC's strategic plan and the need for a common vision / focus for the area. There are parallels with a Norwich based research and innovation campus. JSB offered to contact the relevant organisation in Norwich to obtain further details on their operational activity and, if appropriate, Board set up.

Action : JSB

4. Draft terms of reference and governance

It was noted that prior to the meeting, JSB had circulated a draft terms of reference and governance template. The template outlined suggested headings for consideration. It was suggested that objectives also be included and it was agreed members would use this template as a basis for determining the terms of reference for the Board. A specific vision statement should also be defined. It was agreed that JSB should work up a draft template for circulation to Board members. It was agreed that DH should scope out a vision statement for the Board. During discussions it was agreed that the University of Edinburgh and BBSRC would jointly fund a Project Coordinator to take forward the workstream activities of the Board.

Action: JSB and DH

5. Bush Framework Masterplan

It was noted that JSB had circulated, in advance of the meeting, for discussion and review the Executive Summary and the Action Plan from the Bush Framework Masterplan. IJ led the discussions on the content of the circulated documents. The importance of appropriate branding was highlighted and it was felt that the use of 'Easter Bush' rather than 'Bush' was more suitable. It was thought that the already established EBRC brand could be built on and expanded to include other stakeholders. It was suggested a development sub-group be formed to establish a corporate brand and associated web-site incorporating recommendations from stakeholders. It was agreed that DH would lead on this matter. As it is intended the location be a renowned centre of excellence, attracting business partners nationally and internationally, infrastructure is a major issue. Midlothian Council is leading on this work through, inter alia, its planning strategy for Midlothian which involves direct contact with key infrastructure providers. A particularly important and relatively urgent issue is liaison with Transport Scotland in relation to access from Easter Bush to the A702 trunk road, as well as extended links to the A720 City Bypass.

Action : DH

6. Possible Edinburgh College links

It was noted that, in advance of the meeting, JSB had circulated a proposal (entitled Life Science: Employability and Education Pathway Proposal re Bush Master Plan) from Edinburgh College. IJ provided a further verbal update at the meeting. The aim of the proposal is to forge links with businesses and organisations in the the Easter Bush area. The proposal had been submitted to Midlothian Council and outlines the benefits to be gained from this partnership. The interest of the College was noted and in the meantime the Board acknowledged the opportunity to develop this link. It was agreed that JSB progress the potential establishment of appropriate links with the College.

Action : JSB

7. Suggested workstreams

7.1 External funding

It was noted there are already many European funding opportunities in place and several collaborations with industry partners already established. Further external funding would be sought through active promoting and marketing by the University of Edinburgh and through links with Midlothian Council and Scottish Enterprise. As well as in order to identify major activities and promote economic development it was proposed a role be created to co-ordinate bids for external funding and capital investment. Board members representing

BBSRC, University of Edinburgh and Midlothian Council agreed they would support the financing of such a role. In the meantime it was suggested a route-map be drawn up to define on-going and new financial investment opportunities. JSB offered to progress this matter.

Action : JSB

7.2 Infrastructure issues

IJ provided an update on this issue and advised that Midlothian Council is in the process of submitting proposals to Transport Scotland for the upgrade and development of the local A701/A702 corridor. Because of the importance of Easter Bush being a major international biocentre these proposals have been put forward as a national priority for Transport Scotland. The options were outlined to Board members and include the building of a direct road link from the A720 Edinburgh by-pass and development of the roads in the surrounding area. The poor condition of the roads within the Easter Bush campus was raised with Midlothian Council. To assist in ongoing discussions with Transport Scotland, it was agreed that a suitable template be devised and circulated to Board representatives to try to gain an understanding of current and planned infrastructure requirements in the Easter Bush area. This would inform future discussions with a range of organisations including Scottish Water and other utilities providers. It was agreed that JSB would devise and circulate a suitable template to be completed and returned to JSB by 30 September 2013.

Action : JSB

7.3 Public outreach

At the moment the University of Edinburgh has a Campus Public Engagement Officer in place and many public outreach activities take place to promote the work of the Vet School. It is intended that a Science Outreach Centre be established which will further promote the activities on the wider Easter Bush site. VW offered to progress public outreach issues in liaison with appropriate colleagues.

Action : VW

During general discussion on workstream matters, DH suggested that branding / public engagement be included as a workstream. JSB advised that this would be reflected in the governance template.

Action : JSB

8. Round table partner update

8.1 Roslin Institute

DH reported that the Roslin Institute is currently focussing on the Research Excellence Framework (REF2014) submission to the funding council which covers output for the period 2008-2013. He also reported that Roslin is planning to put in a bid for a centre for agricultural innovation under the new UK Agri-Tech Funding (in the region of for £3 million per year over 5 years) and this would put Roslin in a competitive position to encourage further investment from business partners. This would also incorporate an agriculture informatics centre bringing together world-renowned specialists in that field.

8.2 Moredun Institute

Moredun has just undergone a mid-term review and most of the expenditure is being spent on existing internal commitments. There are intentions to improve the large animal facilities at Moredun but no external funding has been applied for as yet.

8.3 Scottish Rural College (SRUC)

SRUC hope to move their headquarters from the King's Building Campus in Edinburgh to Easter Bush in the future. Currently the animal/veterinarian section is already at Easter Bush but the move of headquarters would bring the plant, consultancy and education departments to the campus. As SRUC has investment obligations at other sites in Scotland it is not certain when this move could take place.

8.4 Veterinary School

Facilities for treatment and research into animal disease continue to expand at the Vet School with plans for a new large animal facility in the pipeline and increasing interactions with the thoroughbred racing industry being made.

8.5 LaSalle Investment Management

CM reported that alternative uses are being considered for their properties at the Bush; Bush House and Fleming House. In light of the increasing numbers of scientists and business partners visiting the site converting Bush House into a hotel would be a suitable option as there is a lack of suitable accommodation nearby. This could also be used by clients of the Vet School animal hospitals as animals are brought from all over Scotland to use the facilities. Student accommodation is also an option. A bid has been placed for Fleming House to be used as a bioresearch/production facility.

8.6 Scottish Enterprise

Scottish Enterprise is involved with the promotion of commercial interactions through the Life Science Advisory Board. As well as having long established connections in animal biotechnology Scottish Enterprise has appointed a member of staff who has responsibilities in the plant science sector.

8.7 BBSRC

BBSRC continues with other similar research/academic campus developments throughout the UK and it was felt it would be useful for the Easter Bush Development Board to draw on their past experiences with the planning and implementation of these sites.

8.8 Bioscience KTN

Chris Warkup (CW) raised the question of the intentions for the previous Roslin Institute site at Roslin Biocentre. It was noted that BBSRC expects to sell the land for housing development.

8.9 Midlothian Council

Midlothian Council recognises the importance of the development of the Easter Bush site in terms of local employment opportunities and as a means to attract more business ventures to the area.

9. Shared vision and priorities for action

All partners acknowledge the importance of the Bush Framework Masterplan as a focus for the delivery of their shared vision for the Easter Bush site. The action plan contained within the document will be used to prioritise strategies. Specific issues were discussed including engagement with industry. DH reported there are already existing frameworks set up with industry partners through Edinburgh Research and Innovation, the University's commercial liaison unit. CW agreed to lead the co-ordination of developing further commercial links with the help of the BBSRC.

Action: CW

10. AOCB

10.1 Other stakeholder fields of interest

It was acknowledged there is no Forestry Commission involvement in the Easter Bush Development Board and it was felt at the moment the aim is for an animal bioscience brand for the site. It was also noted Moredun activities include aquaculture.

11. Date of next meeting

Following discussion it was agreed that the Board should aim to have 3 meetings per annum. The next meeting will be arranged in March 2014.

Action : JSB